

Old Presbyterian Church
Daretown, Salem County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
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133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Old Presbyterian Church
Daretown, Salem County, New Jersey

Owner: The Trustees of Old Presbyterian Church

Date of Erection: 1767

Architect:

Builder:

Present Condition: Fair

Number of Stories: One with gallery

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - brick

Interior walls - panel
sill high, plaster
above

Roof - pitch, wood
shingles

Historical Data:

The first religious services in the Daretown section were held in private houses and the ministers were either lay preachers or traveling missionaries. The first preacher on record was Henry Hook in 1730. It was not until 1737 that the congregation had a regular pastor in the person of the Reverend Mr. Buckingham. Two years later a log church was built. In this log church George Whitfield preached several times while on his missionary tour through West Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Old church records say that "as many as two thousand souls came to listen to Whitfield and

many souls were blessed."

The church was organized in 1741 under the Synod of Pennsylvania with forty-nine persons signing the covenant. David Evans, who came from the Welsh tract in Chester County, Pennsylvania, became the pastor and served until his death in 1751. After Evans, Nehemiah Greenman served the congregation. It was to him that David Brainard gave his "wordly goods" when he took up his missionary work among the Indians. This enabled Greenman to pay for his education for the ministry.

The old church was built during the pastorate of Greenman and there is a legend that it was erected as a memorial to David Brainard. In October, 1765 the congregation decided to build a new church and a building committee was appointed consisting of Jacob Du Bois, later a Revolutionary War captain, Thomas Sparks, and Matthew Newkirk. The building was completed in 1767. On the south elevation over the door can be seen the following date and initials "N. G." on the first line, "V. D. M." on the second line, the date "1767" on the third, and initials "P. G. C." on the last.

During the Revolutionary War many members of the church served in the army. There is a tradition that troops were billeted in this old church.

In the early nineteenth century a flourishing college, The Pittsgrove College, was maintained by several succeeding pastors of this church.

In 1858 during the pastorate of Reverend P. Shields, it was decided that a more substantial structure should replace the old building. The cornerstone of the present building was laid in 1864. After the building of the new structure, the old one

was used as a recreational center, more lately as a gymnasium for the young people of the congregation; because of this, the high pulpit and the old interior furnishings have been lost or destroyed. At present there is a movement to restore the old building. It is no longer used as a gymnasium and the idea of holding annual anniversary services in this structure is being planned.

According to Van Meter, after the Revolutionary War the church was called Pittsgrove Presbyterian Church by which name it is still known. Previous to this according to the same authority, it was known as the Pilesgrove Presbyterian Church apparently named after Thomas Pyle who bought the ten thousand acres which became Pilesgrove Township.

Bibliography:

Heston, A. M. South Jersey A History 1664-1925 4 Volumes New York and Chicago, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1924

Van Meter, A. H. Relics of Ye Olden Days in Salem County, New Jersey Salem, Robert Gwynne, 1892

Data collected from old church records and histories in the possession of Mrs. Clarence Keene, a descendant of the Du Bois family, by Alberta H. Moss, H.A.B.S. Field Historian

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3/11/57 TLU